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URBAN GROWTH IN THE NATION'S SPACEPORT

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Harry A. Green*

Population and economic growth in the Cape Kennedy region have been developing at a phenomenal rate. The United States space program and its concomitant developments are primarily responsible for the tremendous population concentration and economic prosperity. The rate of population growth and the degree of economic prosperity are not uniform throughout the region but vary according to geographic proximity with the Atlantic Missile Range and the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

We shall consider the Cape Kennedy region to comprise those counties that are adjacent to Brevard, where the Cape facilities are located, and includes Brevard, Orange, Indian River, Volusia, Osceola and Seminole. The Joint Community Impact Coordination Committee¹ has designated these counties as the region experiencing the most direct impact of the space program.

The area of greatest growth has been the coastal strip nearest the Cape facilities which includes Brevard County, the southernmost tip of Volusia County and the northernmost tip of Indian River County. The Orlando metropolitan area, moreover,

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¹ This Committee was created as a result of a meeting called by Governor Farris Bryant in 1961 to discuss the effect of the space program on the State of Florida. It has been active in investigating the space impact in the Cape Kennedy area.

has also experienced significant growth but it is difficult to determine the degree to which it is related to the space program.

By far the greatest impact, however, has been felt in Brevard County; and for this reason, special attention will be devoted to it. Between the 1950 and 1960 censuses, population grew at a rate of 371.1 per cent, making it the fastest growing county in the United States. Conservative projections indicate a 21 per cent increase in population in 1962 and 53 per cent by 1965. The annual growth rate continued to increase in 1961 and 1962 and only now is it beginning to level off.

Another measurement of the rapid development in the east central Florida region is personal income per capita. Again we find the most spectacular increase in Brevard County. From 1950 to 1960, per capita income rose from \$1,018 to \$2,316 for a rate of increase of 127.5 per cent.² During this period Brevard moved from thirty-sixth place in the state to sixth place. No other county in Florida duplicated this rate of growth.

A direct indication of the federal contribution to the economic growth is expenditure activity. For instance, the total payroll at the Atlantic Missile Range grew from \$5 million in 1950 to \$130 million in 1960. By 1967, it is expected to exceed \$200 million. The total cost of the Vertical Assembly

²The State of Florida, Statistical Abstract of Florida (The Council on Economic Development), p. 38.

Building on Merritt Island, which will be the largest building in the world, alone will reach \$110 million in construction costs.³ The value of future NASA construction is speculative at the moment because of congressional reservations, but even with construction cutbacks, capital expenditures are likely to be considerable. Capital investment in the Atlantic Missile Range will be two and one-half billion dollars by 1966.

The Pattern of Government

Every resident in Brevard County is subject to at least six governments: federal, state, county, school district, Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District, and a mosquito control district. In addition, most of the residents are subject to one or more of the following: municipality, port authority, hospital authority, airport authority, road and bridge district, navigation district, drainage district, and recreation district.

There are at least twenty special-purpose districts and authorities in Brevard County. It is difficult to obtain a completely accurate inventory of these special units of government because of the absence of a reliable system for reporting their creation and abolition.

Apparently almost any service function can be assigned to a special district on a restricted area or county-wide basis. The only major functions for which the special district device

³Quoted from a speech by U. Wright Kerns, Deputy Community Development Officer, NASA, January 16, 1964.

has not been used are sanitation, police protection, and fire protection. Authority to create sanitation districts, however, already resides with the Brevard County Board of Commissioners.

Presently, most of the county's population live in the sixteen incorporated and twenty-nine unincorporated communities. Of the sixteen municipalities, eleven are located in a cluster in south Brevard County. Driving south on U. S. Highway 1 from Titusville, one will pass alternately through Cocoa, Rockledge, Palm Shores, Eau Gallie, Melbourne, Palm Bay and Malabar. Almost enclosed by the development of Eau Gallie and Melbourne which are contiguous, are Melbourne Village and West Melbourne.

Driving north on A1A across the Indian River from Melbourne, one will pass alternately through Melbourne Beach, Indianalantic, Indian Harbour Beach, and Satellite Beach. The four largest cities--Cocoa, Eau Gallie, Melbourne, and Titusville--are comparable in size, but in 1960 all were under the 20,000 population mark. It is probable that Eau Gallie and possible that Melbourne now exceed this number.

There are four cities in central Brevard: Cape Canaveral, Cocoa, Cocoa Beach, and Rockledge. Rockledge and Cocoa are separated from the Atlantic Ocean by the Indian and Banana Rivers, while Cape Canaveral and Cocoa Beach are coastal cities. From Melbourne Beach through the town of Cape Canaveral in central Brevard, there is an almost constant urban coastal development.

Titusville at present is the only incorporated community in north Brevard. Prior to a consolidation in 1963, the town

of Whispering Hills was a suburb of Titusville. Last year, however, Whispering Hills and the unincorporated Indian River City were merged with the older city. This merger expanded the population of Titusville immediately from around 7,000 persons to over 12,000.

Brevard County as an urban area is unique in that it has no central city around which urban development has occurred. The largest concentration of population is found in central and south Brevard County. This location of in-migrants has occurred because of the desire for accessibility to the Cape facilities and Patrick Air Force Base. Future space-facility development, however, will be on Merritt Island, which is north of the present Cape location. Thus, it is anticipated that future population distribution will be greater in northern Brevard.

The Problems of Growth

With any great influx of population into an area, a number of acute problems are immediately created. Although some of these problems are private and require private solutions, the most compelling ones are public and require governmental solution. Few areas that experience rapid demographic and economic growth are prepared to cope with the resulting problems. Processes and structure of government are usually oriented toward the needs of a rural environment and are not easily adapted to the burgeoning problems of urbanism. In a word, urban development tends to render existing local government obsolete.

Brevard County is confronted with conditions that are characteristic of urban growth areas everywhere. Local adaptation will be unique, however, because the pattern of urban development and the condition of local government are peculiar to the area. Perhaps the most urgent problem is the provision of adequate services for the mushrooming population. Adequate water and sewage service, police and fire protection, sufficient public school facilities, adequate highways and streets, refuse collection and disposal, hospital and medical care facilities, urban planning, and parks and recreation are all service areas requiring immediate attention.

In the following paragraphs, attention is focused on three major problems of government in Brevard County. They have been selected because they are urgent, they affect municipal government, and they transcend the political jurisdiction of any single governmental entity. Space limitations here preclude consideration of other, perhaps equally important, problem areas.

Water and Sanitation

Recently, the Honorable Joe Wickham, Chairman of the Brevard County Commission, pointed out that of all the problems in Brevard, water and sanitation are the most important.⁴ Water needs in any urban growth area are complex because of a variety of competing uses. The ideal situation would be one where there is

⁴The Brevard Sentinel, Sunday, January 26, 1964, p. 9C.

an adequate, usable supply for every need. Essentially, water problems can be reduced to questions of quantity and quality.

The present condition of water and sewage services in Brevard County leaves much to be desired. A great part of these services has been met by private utility companies that have small plants and limited perspectives of adequate sanitation needs. There is ample evidence to suggest that some of these companies are not maintaining the same standards as the municipalities in providing these services.

A citizens committee on sanitation has reported that of thirty-four sewage treatment plants in the county, twenty-four operate without supervision and with unknown results. These facilities are grossly inadequate since an estimated 50 per cent of all housing units in the county have septic tanks. Furthermore, there are sixty-four public water supplies that receive only minimal supervision. An estimated 9,000 homes obtain their water from private wells that are subject to surface pollution.⁵

According to the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, the major local sanitation problems in the United States are: (1) inadequate investment in sanitation facilities and particularly in sewage treatment plants, (2) the fragmentation of responsibility for providing the services of water

⁵Citizens Survey Committee, Health, Welfare and Recreation Survey of Brevard County, p. 7.

supply and sewage disposal, and (3) conflicts between major city and suburbs over rate differentials and extension of services.⁶ All of these problems exist in Brevard County. Furthermore, there is the additional complication of the absence of one major distributor. In most urban and metropolitan areas, a central city provides most water and sewage services. Although this may not solve any problem, it does establish high sanitary standards and mitigate pollution, public health problems and the fragmentation of responsibility.

The Brevard County Board of Commissioners recently took the first step toward solving their water and sewage problems. A Water and Sewer Board was established for the purpose of regulating private utilities companies providing services to the unincorporated areas of the County. Unfortunately the legislation that authorized the Board excluded from its jurisdiction all companies that were providing services prior to the passage of the act.

As one observer noted recently, water supply and sewage treatment problems could be solved if "' (1) someone else paid the bill, (2) social patterns were not disturbed, and (3) political boundaries were not violated.'"⁷

⁶Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Intergovernmental Responsibilities for Water Supply and Sewage Disposal in Metropolitan Areas (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 16-37.

⁷Clyde L. Palmer, City Engineer, Detroit, Michigan, quoted in ibid., p. 17.

Urban Planning

One of the immediate problems confronting any urban community is decision making about future land use. Once basic growth patterns are established, it is difficult to modify them because of a mixture of social, economic, and political factors. If land-use decisions relative to the construction of new industrial plants, highways, airports, schools, public works, businesses, and residences are not made deliberately then they will be made by default. Unfortunately, many of these decisions have been made by default in the Cape Kennedy area, and primarily because of the lack of institutional procedures for making such decisions. But even where such procedures exist, the method of enforcement--zoning--has been so lightly applied as to permit many variations of use.

Several municipalities in Brevard County have planning and zoning commissions and regulate the conditions under which residential developments are subdivided; others either have no planning authority or have chosen not to exercise it. The local planning efforts to date, however, have been directed more to the rectification of past conditions than to the creation of a design for the future.

But even if every city possessed and assiduously exercised both planning and zoning authority with a design for solving their problems, an important coordinating ingredient would still be lacking. The condition of water and sewage services in Brevard County provides an excellent example of the need for governmental planning on an area basis.

The county government has become involved with the physical problems of growth, but unfortunately no leadership pattern has emerged. Brevard County adopted zoning regulations and established a zoning commission as early as 1958. Early this year Brevard hired a county planner to formulate development plans but it is too soon to evaluate this action.

One of the most significant activities of the county government is its participation in the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. In addition to Brevard, the following counties also participate: Indian River, Volusia, Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Lake. During the first year of its operations (1962-63), the Regional Planning Council: (1) prepared a preliminary regional plan, (2) completed aerial photography of the entire region and prepared planimetric base maps of the urbanized areas, and (3) employed a professional staff to implement the long-range planning design. This program was partially financed by a "Section 701" urban planning assistance grant from the federal government's Housing and Home Finance Agency and partially by contributions from the participating counties.

Transportation and Traffic Engineering

Another major problem in the Brevard County-Orange County area is the transportation of people. Since there are no public transportation systems providing commuter services in the area, virtually all commuting is by private automobile.

This extensive use of the automobile emphasizes the great need for the development of an adequate urban highway system and the importance of realistic traffic engineering. Moreover, since state and urban highways use 30 per cent of all developed urban land in the United States, proposed solutions to transportation problems have ramifications that can be projected far into the future.

The present highway system was not designed for the great upsurge in automobile travel that has occurred. Attempts to rectify existing inadequacies by improving streets and highways invariably results in a temporary aggravation of the traffic problem. The present widening of U. S. Highway 1 in Brevard County is a case in point.

Perhaps the worst feature of the old highway system was the absence of a direct approach to the space facilities, particularly from Orlando. This aspect of the problem has been alleviated slightly by improvements in existing streets and highways and by the construction of a new two-lane toll causeway.

The greatest impediments to the flow of traffic at peak hours are the causeways. Indeed, the causeway from Cocoa to Cape Kennedy is commonly called the "car strangled spanner."

The increased use of the new toll-causeway and the construction of others probably will help ease the strain of traffic congestion. If developments in other growth areas are indicative, however, this will be one of the least soluble problems faced by Brevard County and the developing region.

Toward Understanding Urban Growth

Urbanization as a significant characteristic of modern life has become one of the most intensively studied phenomena of this era. Perhaps nowhere in the United States has urban development occurred so rapidly in so short a span of time as in Brevard and its adjoining counties. Consequently, this area is deserving of special attention, not only because of local problems but because of its national significance.

At the present time, a comprehensive basic research program is being conducted under the auspices of NASA. In addition to the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, the Florida State University and the University of Florida are engaged in research that will lead to the identification of problems and to recommendations for action.

Two research institutes at Florida State University are involved in the NASA program--the Institute for Social Research and the Institute of Governmental Research. The Institute for Social Research is undertaking two basic projects: (1) an attitude survey of the adequacy of community organizations in helping newcomers to become part of the community, and (2) a comparative analysis of adjustment patterns by space-related civilian and military families who are already in the area.

The Institute of Governmental Research is also undertaking two basic studies: (1) an examination of the effect of the space program on local government, and (2) an analysis of the administration and financing of public utilities. In addition

to these four studies, an analysis of the impact of the space program on local public finance is being conducted by a member of the Florida State University economics faculty.

At the University of Florida, the Bureau of Economic and Business Research is conducting studies on population growth, retail and service trades, the structure of industrial activity and the composition of the labor market. Furthermore, with funds from a second "Section 701" planning grant from the HHFA and contributions from the seven counties and interested private parties, the Planning Council has planned a number of comprehensive regional investigations.

The east central Florida region, particularly Brevard County and the immediate coastal impact area, will probably become one of the most intensively studied areas in Florida or in the United States. If this research provides a basis for intelligent community adaptation to existing and anticipated problems, it will have accomplished an objective infrequently attained by social science research.